

Henry Ford: Would-Be Champion of the “Good Jews”

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Henry Ford (1863-1947) was born the year of the battle of Gettysburg, and died two years after atomic bombs were dropped on Japan. His life personified the tremendous technological changes achieved in that span. Using his innate mechanical abilities, hard work and exceptional inventiveness, Ford led the transformation of American industry. *Fortune* magazine chose Ford as its pick for the best businessman of the 20th century, while a poll of academic experts rated Ford as the greatest entrepreneur in American history.[1]

Ford also displayed what some people consider to be a darker side. Ford's newspaper, the *Dearborn Independent*, in 1920 began a series of articles and editorials on the “international Jew” which ran for 91 consecutive weeks[2]. Ford was greatly admired by Adolf Hitler, and is the only American mentioned in the text of *Mein Kampf*. [3] On the occasion of his 75th birthday in 1938, Ford accepted the German government's highest civilian award for a foreigner, The Order of the Grand Cross of the German Eagle. [4]

Ford biographer Vincent Curcio asks, “How could such malignancy, and greatness too, coexist in one person?” [5] This article attempts to answer this question.

Famous Industrialist

Ford grew up on a farm in Michigan. From the beginning he had little interest in farming, instead wanting to work with machinery and mechanics. Ford left school at Age 17 to work in the machine shop of Drydock Engine Works, and worked nights repairing watches in a jewelry shop. By 1895 he had developed a strong interest in building cars. However, Ford's idea of building cars with gasoline engines was rejected by almost everyone. Ford wrote that his employer said in regard to his experiments with a gas engine: “Electricity, yes, that's the coming thing. But gas—no.” [6]

Thomas A. Edison was probably the first person to encourage Ford to use gasoline engines in cars. At a convention in Atlantic City, Ford described his plans to Edison for so using an internal-combustion engine. Edison replied:

Yes, there is a big future for any light-weight engine that can develop a high horsepower and be self-contained. No one kind of motive power is ever going to do all the work of the country. We do not know what electricity can do, but I take for granted that it cannot do everything. Keep on with your engine. If you can get what you are after, I can see a great future. [7]

Ford's conversation with Edison began a famous friendship that lasted more than three decades. Ford admired Edison and considered him to be the greatest man in the world. Edison described Ford as not only a “natural mechanic” and a “natural businessman,” but that rarest of types, “a combination of the two.” [8]

After two failed attempts at forming a car company, the Ford Motor Company officially opened for business in June 1903. With the debut of the Model T, Ford had finally built and sold a car that was well-made and simple to operate. Ford continued to work on building a car that cost even less and was easier to drive and repair. All of Ford's ideas on the ideal automobile came together in 1908 when he created the Model T. [9]

Ford announced in 1909, without any previous warning, that in the future he was going to build only the Model T. Ford said:

I will build a motor car for the great multitude. It will be large enough for the family but small enough for the individual to run and care for. It will be constructed of the best materials, by the best men to be hired, after the simplest designs that modern engineering can devise. But it will be so low in price that no man making a good salary will be unable to own one—and enjoy with his family the blessing of hours of pleasure in God's great open spaces. [10]

Ford wrote that the general comment to his announcement was: “If Ford does that, he will be out of business in six months.” [11] Ford proved his critics wrong. Ford Motor Company sold 15 million Model Ts by 1927, its last

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Columnists

Santiago Alvarez (3)
Nemo Anonymous (1)
Enrique Aynat Eknes (1)
Robert Bartec (1)
Joseph P. Bellinger (7)
Joseph Bishop (6)
Jean-Marie Boisdefeu (2)
Kerry R. Bolton (16)
Arthur R. Butz (2)
Andrea Carancini (1)
Wojciech Chworostowski (1)
Veronica Clark (4)
Thomas Dalton (14)
Daniel D. Desjardins (1)
Frederick Donauer (1)
Robert Faurisson (7)
Frederic Freeman (1)
Henry Gardner (1)
Stephen Goodson (1)
Jürgen Graf (4)
Paul Grubach (8)
Martin Gunnels (3)
Guido Heimann (1)
Panagiotis Heliotis (20)
Johannes Heyne (1)
Michael A. Hoffman (1)
Göran Holming (1)
Rudolf Höss (1)
Nigel Jackson (8)

year of production, making Ford a very wealthy man.[12]

The Model T lived a long time for an automobile. More importantly, the Model T transformed a nation. American historian Richard Snow writes: "The departing Model T left us the landscape we know today—gas stations, suburbs, parkways, hot-dog stands shaped like hot dogs, motels, and much that goes with all that: vacations and spending money, for instance." [13]

Not only did Ford build a great car, but in 1914 he also raised the minimum pay for Ford employees to the then-unheard-of amount of \$5 per day. Ford had dramatically increased wages for his employees while reducing the cost of his car.[14] Ford's thesis demanding prosperity for the workers made every laboring person a potential customer. He proved that corporations can enrich both their employees and their investors at the same time. [15]

Folk Hero

Henry Ford was not an intellectual. This was revealed in the early summer of 1919, when Ford took the witness stand at the courthouse in Mount Clemens, Michigan in his libel suit against the *Chicago Tribune*. This newspaper had published an editorial a few years earlier describing Ford as "an ignorant idealist...[and] an anarchistic enemy of the nation" because Ford opposed President Wilson's use of the National Guard to patrol the border against raids from Pancho Villa's Mexican guerrillas. Ford sued the paper for libel, and the *Tribune's* lawyers set about the task of disproving libel by demonstrating the truth of Ford's ignorance.[16]

Under relentless questioning from the *Tribune's* chief defense attorney, Ford displayed an astonishing lack of knowledge. Ford thought that the American Revolution had occurred in 1812; he defined chili con carne as "a large mobile army"; he said Benedict Arnold was "a writer, I think"; and he could not identify even the basic principles of American government. After fumbling question after question, Ford finally said, "I admit I am ignorant about most things." [17]

Although the jury heard abundant evidence of Ford's ignorance, it heard no evidence proving his anarchism. The jury found that Ford had been libeled. However, the jury awarded Ford only six cents in damages. When newspapers and magazines reported on Ford's lack of knowledge, Ford said regarding newspapers, "I rarely read anything else except the headlines." In a private interview with a reporter, Ford said, "I don't like to read books; they muss up my mind." Ford was perfectly content to admit that he was so focused on work that he had almost no time left for book learning.[18]

In fact, Ford had always been suspicious of book learning. He insisted that real wisdom lay not in paper abstractions, but in areas where people had to find real solutions to real problems. Ford said in 1931: "I could never get much from books. When you have to solve a problem that nobody has yet thought about, how can you learn the solution from a book?" Ford was an intuitive thinker who arrived at conclusions through flashes of perception rather than systematic analysis.[19]

To the surprise and consternation of highbrows everywhere, Ford emerged from this seemingly embarrassing trial an even greater American folk hero than he had been before. Common people, rather than being scandalized by Ford's ignorance, seemed to appreciate it. They admired his refreshing lack of pretension, and sympathized with his admission that he was too focused on work to get much formal education. Small-town newspapers urged readers to send sympathetic letters of support to Ford, and tens of thousands of people did so.[20]

The Dearborn Independent

Ford purchased the *Dearborn Independent*, a small community weekly, in 1918 when financial difficulties were about to kill it. He launched the newspaper into the national arena, and it became a vehicle for bringing his views directly to the American people.[21] Ford said when he bought the small newspaper, "I have definite ideas and ideals that I believe are practical for the good of all, and intend giving them to the public without having them garbled, distorted or misquoted." [22]

In the January 11, 1919 issue of the *Dearborn Independent*, Ford stated in an editorial: "This paper exists to spread ideas, the best that can be found. It aims to furnish food for thought. It desires to stir ambition and encourage independent thinking." Ford explained his own role in the paper, "I have never pretended to be a writer or an editor, but I can talk with plain Americans in a way that we can understand each other." [23]

In the spring of 1920, the *Dearborn Independent* began chronicling the menace of international Jewry. Many of these articles were later reprinted by Ford in four volumes called *The International Jew*. This book was translated into 16 languages, with an estimated 10 million copies sold in America and millions more in foreign countries. Few books have ever had such widespread circulation.[24]

The *Dearborn Independent* articles reported a worldwide conspiracy by Jewish international capitalists to corrupt and subjugate Gentile societies. *The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* were introduced in the tenth of the 91 articles published by the *Dearborn Independent*. The *Protocols* described a worldwide plot to destroy the Aryan nations by lending leadership and financial backing to every activity which would undermine the social and moral institutions of the gentile world. Ford hired an impressive team to investigate and write his anti-Zionist articles for the *Dearborn Independent*. [25]

Jewish and non-Jewish sources protested Ford's campaign against international Jewry. Two major Jewish figures, Morris Gest and Lewis Berstein, filed libel suits of \$5 million and \$1 million, respectively, against Ford. Aaron Sapiro, a prominent Jewish attorney and cooperative organizer, also filed a \$1 million libel suit aimed not at the newspaper but at its owner, Henry Ford. Ford eventually settled out of court with Sapiro for an estimated \$140,000, and made a 600-word public retraction as part of the settlement.[26]

Friedrich Jansson (4)
Heinrich Köchel (1)
Nicholas Kollerstrom (5)
Thomas Kues (15)
Ezra MacVie (22)
Carlo Mattogno (13)
Daniel McGowan (2)
David Merlin (1)
Ken MeyerCORD (2)
Seamus Moriarty (1)
Theodore J. O'Keefe (1)
Olodogma (2)
Giuseppe Poggi (1)
Carlos Whitlock Porter (2)
N. Joseph Potts (3)
Ralph Raico (15)
Andy Ritchie (1)
Lou A. Rollins (4)
Jett Rucker (34)
Germar Rudolf (19)
Peter Rushton (1)
Walter N. Sanning (1)
Emil Schepers (1)
Klaus Schwensen (7)
Hadding Scott (5)
Rich Siegel (1)
R.T. Sloane (1)
Bradley R. Smith (2)
Chip Smith (4)
Michael K. Smith (2)
Kosto Tamo (1)
Fredrick Töben (1)
Mark Turley (2)
John Wear (101)
Jack Wickoff (1)
Richard A. Widmann (35)
Christoph M. Wieland (1)
David Wilson (2)
Nigel Winters (1)

Ford closed the *Dearborn Independent* on December 31, 1927. A major reason for closing the newspaper is that it was hurting sales of his automobiles. Will Rogers joked, "He used to have it in for the Jewish people until he saw them in Chevrolets, and then he said, 'Boys, I am all wrong.'" Ford's articles about Jews indelibly stained his reputation and raised questions about his moral and ideological character.[27]

Source of Alleged Anti-Semitism

Given the fact that Ford was not an intellectual, the question is: How did Ford become convinced that there was an international Jewish conspiracy? Ford says he became convinced of the international Jewish conspiracy in the winter of 1915 when he funded and sailed on a "Peace Ship" to Europe to attempt to end World War I. During Christmas 1921, Ford told a *New York Times* reporter in Florence, Alabama:

It was the Jews themselves who convinced me of the direct relationship between the international Jew and war. In fact, they went out of their way to convince me.

On the Peace Ship were two very prominent Jews. We had not been at sea 200 miles before they began telling me of the power of the Jewish race, of how they controlled the world through their control of gold, and that the Jew and no one but the Jew could end the war. I was reluctant to believe it but they went into detail to convince me of the means by which the Jews controlled the war, how they had the money, how they had cornered all the basic materials needed to fight the war and all that, and they talked so long and so well that they convinced me.

They said, and they believed, that the Jews started the war, that they would continue it as long as they wished, and that until the Jews stopped the war it could not be stopped. I was so disgusted I would have liked to turn the ship back.[28]

Rosika Schwimmer, who was on the Peace Ship with Ford, quoted Ford as saying even before the Peace Ship sailed: "I know who caused the war—the German-Jewish bankers! I have the evidence here"—he patted his breast pocket— "Facts! The German-Jewish bankers caused the war. I can't give out the facts now, because I haven't got them all yet, but I'll have them soon." [29] Thus, Ford probably had some knowledge of an international Jewish conspiracy even before talking to these two prominent Jews.

Ford unquestionably believed *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* were real. Ford said about the *Protocols*: "They fit with what is going on. They are 16 years old, and they have fitted the world situation up to this time. They fit it now." [30]

Ford also unquestionably believed that an international Jewish conspiracy controlled the American financial system. An editorial in the *Dearborn Independent* stated that "the International Jew invented our financial and interest system, and is today in direct control of all financial centers of government, including the United States Federal Reserve System, which he organized and is now perfecting according to his original plan." [31]

Ford sincerely believed that he was only attacking "bad" Jews in his newspaper, and that the "good" Jews would support his efforts to create positive reforms. Ford was genuinely mystified that good Jews did not see the truth of what he published. For example, Rabbi Leo Franklin of Detroit had been a neighbor and longtime friend of Ford. Ford had sent Franklin a new Model T each year for several years, but in the summer of 1920, Franklin returned the gift because he felt Ford's articles would "poison the minds of the masses against the Jews." Ford telephoned Franklin a few days later and asked: "What's wrong, Dr. Franklin? Has something come between us?" [32]

It is also clear that Ford treated fairly the 3,000 or more Jews he employed. For example, Philip Slomovitz, as editor of Detroit's *Jewish News*, had numerous occasions to visit Ford Motor Company plants. Slomovitz was always struck by the number of Jews who would come up to him and say, "Henry Ford is a great man. He has always treated us well." [33]

Last Years

Henry Ford's only child, Edsel, suddenly lapsed into a coma on May 25, 1943 while at home in bed. The next day, the Ford empire was shaken by the news that Edsel Ford had died during the night. The elder Ford, just shy of his 80th birthday, lamented to friends, "Maybe I pushed the boy too hard." Production problems with the B-24 program at Ford plants had taken a tremendous toll on company President Edsel Ford, whose health had been rapidly failing for months under the strain. [34]

Henry Ford also suffered from declining health in his last years. In the spring of 1946, while watching a public-information film called *Death Stations* showing gruesome images of the Majdanek Concentration Camp, Ford suffered a massive stroke. Josephine Gomon, director of female personnel at Ford's Willow Run Bomber Plant, wrote: "The man who had pumped millions of dollars of anti-Semitic propaganda into Europe during the twenties saw the ravages of a plague he had helped to spread. The virus had come full circle." [35]

Ford suffered a cerebral hemorrhage just before midnight on April 7, 1947, and died in his sleep at the age of 83. Every industrial worker in the state of Michigan was asked to observe a moment of silence on the day of his funeral. [36] Fred Smith, an official of the Ford Motor Company, described Ford's funeral: "You never saw anything like it in your life. People would cry, others would try to touch the coffin, and reach over and touch him and so forth. People in all walks of life, Negroes, Jews, Gentiles, Chinese, Japanese, Hindus....came from all over....The traffic was tied up for miles." [37]

Ford's eldest grandson, Henry Ford II, had been appointed president of Ford Motor Company more than a year earlier. Henry II moved to disavow, once and for all, any remaining vestiges of anti-Semitism on behalf of the company. He publicly stated that copies of *The International Jew* were without the authorization of his grandfather, the Ford Motor Company, or himself. Under Henry Ford II's leadership, Ford Motor Company spent

millions of dollars advertising in Jewish publications, donated generously to Jewish causes, and ensured that these initiatives received wide publicity in the Jewish media.[38]

Ford Motor Company continued to distance itself from Henry Ford's alleged anti-Semitism. On February 23, 1997, NBC broadcast the television premiere of Steven Spielberg's movie *Schindler's List*. The following announcement accompanied this broadcast: "By foregoing commercials during the screening, the Ford Division of the Ford Motor Company will make TV history as the sole sponsor of the program." [39]

Conclusion

Henry Ford made a major contribution to much of the technological progress achieved in the last 120 years. Ford's innovations include the moving assembly line, affordable automobiles, vertical integration of all aspects of his industry from raw materials to the shipping of finished products, and fair wages for all employees. The financial legacy of the Ford Foundation has also benefited many charitable causes.[40]

Ford's reputation has been badly tarnished by the 91 articles published in the *Dearborn Independent* exposing the danger and corruption of international Jewry. Albert Lee, for example, calls Ford's articles "the greatest barrage of anti-Semitism in American history." [41] However, Ford was hoping that by subjecting good Jews to the light of truth, they would purge their ranks of the bad Jews. The *Dearborn Independent* said, "These articles have always held that the cleansing must come from within Judah itself." [42] Ford deserves praise rather than scorn for courageously exposing the evil tendencies embosomed within the agendas of international Jewry.

Endnotes

[1] Watts, Steven, *The People's Tycoon: Henry Ford and the American Century*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005, p. xiv.

[2] Guinn, Jeff, *The Vagabonds: The Story of Henry Ford and Thomas Edison's Ten-Year Road Trip*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2019, pp. 142-143.

[3] Lee, Albert, *Henry Ford and the Jews*, New York: Stein and Day, 1980, pp. 45-46, 59.

[4] Curcio, Vincent, *Henry Ford*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 156.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. xii.

[6] Ford, Henry, *My Life and Work*, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1923, pp. 24, 34.

[7] *Ibid.*, pp. 234-235.

[8] Watts, Steven, *The People's Tycoon: Henry Ford and the American Century*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005, pp. 33, 42.

[9] Burgan, Michael, *Who Was Henry Ford?*, New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 2014, pp. 46-54.

[10] Ford, Henry, *My Life and Work*, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1923, pp. 72-73.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 73.

[12] Snow, Richard, *I Invented the Modern Age: The Rise of Henry Ford*, New York: Scribner, 2013, p. 319.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 321.

[14] Rae, John B., *Henry Ford*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969, p. 74.

[15] Wik, Reynold M., *Henry Ford and Grass-roots America*, Ann Arbor, Mich.: The University of Michigan Press, 1972, pp. 180-181.

[16] Watts, Steven, *The People's Tycoon: Henry Ford and the American Century*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005, p. ix.

[17] *Ibid.*

[18] *Ibid.*, pp. ix-x.

[19] *Ibid.*, pp. 480, 495.

- [20] *Ibid.*, p. x.
- [21] *Ibid.*, p. 377.
- [22] Lee, Albert, *Henry Ford and the Jews*, New York: Stein and Day, 1980, p. 15.
- [23] Watts, Steven, *The People's Tycoon: Henry Ford and the American Century*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005, p. 274.
- [24] Lee, Albert, *Henry Ford and the Jews*, New York: Stein and Day, 1980, p. 14.
- [25] *Ibid.*, pp. 15-17, 27-29.
- [26] *Ibid.*, pp. 34, 43, 71-82.
- [27] Watts, Stevens, *The People's Tycoon: Henry Ford and the American Century*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005, pp. 395-397.
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- [31] *Ibid.*, pp. 215-216.
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- [34] Wallace, Max, *The American Axis: Henry Ford, Charles Lindbergh, and the Rise of the Third Reich*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003, p. 313.
- [35] *Ibid.*, pp. 358-359.
- [36] *Ibid.*, p. 359.
- [37] Wik, Reynold M., *Henry Ford and Grass-roots America*, Ann Arbor, Mich.: The University of Michigan Press, 1972, p. 5.
- [38] Wallace, Max, *The American Axis: Henry Ford, Charles Lindbergh, and the Rise of the Third Reich*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2003, pp. 359-360.
- [39] *Ibid.*, p. 375.
- [40] Bryan, Ford R., *Clara: Mrs. Henry Ford*, Dearborn, Mich.: Ford Books, 2001, p. 11.
- [41] Lee, Albert, *Henry Ford and the Jews*, New York: Stein and Day, 1980, p. 14.
- [42] *Ibid.*, p. 33.

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